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**From:** Schnittger, David  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 22, 2021 5:02 PM  
**To:** Max Bearak ([max.bearak@washpost.com](mailto:max.bearak@washpost.com)) <[max.bearak@washpost.com](mailto:max.bearak@washpost.com)>  
**Subject:** Angola

Max,

My colleagues and I at Squire Patton Boggs are registered under FARA to represent the Presidency of Angola. I came across the story below my signature, which you wrote in late 2017. We found ourselves wondering if you might be interested in considering a follow-up that looks at how President Lourenço and his administration have done in following through on the promises of change you wrote about four years ago. We also have some news we might be able to share exclusively that could fit well with a potential story on the topic. Any chance you might be interested in a call with me and my colleague Robert Kapla, who leads our Angola work, to discuss a bit further? Thanks for considering, and hope all is well.

Dave Schnittger  
On behalf of the SPB Team for Angola

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## Angola shows early signs of meaningful democratic transition as Zimbabwe falters

By Max Bearak

November 21, 2017

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/11/21/angola-shows-early-signs-of-meaningful-democratic-transition-as-zimbabwe-falters/>

A revolutionary anti-colonial leader who held power for almost four decades. A government rife with nepotism and corruption. A people beset by poverty. Hope for a democratic transition, but far more skepticism that it would ever happen. No, this isn't Zimbabwe — it's Angola.

Three months ago, southern Africa's oil-rich bastion of economic inequality held open elections, its first after 38 years under autocrat José Eduardo dos Santos. His chosen successor, João Lourenço, won handily. Lourenço promised an anti-corruption drive and swore he wouldn't be a puppet of the deeply entrenched dos Santos family, but it seemed like the standard setup for more years of strongman rule.

Yet, contrary to expectations, Lourenço "seems to be on the right path," said Zenaida Machado, who covers the region for Human Rights Watch. Lourenço has indeed made bold anti-corruption moves, especially in forcing sweeping personnel changes at the highest levels of government.

He has fired the heads of the intelligence service and the national police, reversing the recent extension of their terms by dos Santos. He has dismissed the governor of the central bank, the head of the diamond company Endiama and the boards of all three state-owned media companies.

He also removed dos Santos's daughter, Isabel, the richest woman in Africa, as the chair of the state-owned oil behemoth. As David Pilling [wrote in the Financial Times](#), Lourenço has even "abolished a government communications department through which money had been funneled, via lucrative contracts, to one of the former president's other daughters."

These moves seem geared toward stripping the dos Santos family of its near-monopoly over state power and finances. But observers still urge caution. While hopes are high after Lourenço's initial actions, it's still too early to tell whether he is on a truly liberalizing path.

For example, as revealed in the [Panama Papers](#), the dos Santos family allegedly transferred \$4 billion from Angola's sovereign wealth fund to an account in Switzerland. Lourenço has been silent on this. Some of Lourenço's moves also resemble what Portuguese-speaking Angolans call a "dança das cadeiras" — a dance of chairs, shuffling ministers from one office to another, Machado said.

Lourenço's political objectives are difficult to discern because he and every ruling-party member kept such low profiles during the dos Santos years. Ambition and self-promotion were regarded as threats by dos Santos. Only now that Lourenço is president are we getting any real sense of what he will do as an autonomous politician.

"All that we can be sure of is what we have seen: that Lourenço has moved quickly and boldly to remove dos Santos appointees from top positions in the economy, state security and the media," said Justin Pearce, a professor of African politics at the University of Cambridge. "Many politicians the world over have come to power with

promises of sweeping change, only to disappoint. Let's give him credit for what he has done and remain vigilant to what is ahead."

Given the tendency toward pessimism around democratic transitions in Africa, Angola's is one to watch closely. If Lourenço successfully dismantles the dos Santos empire — and refrains from creating his own — it could be an example for others to follow.